

each recessed groove receives a corresponding tongue disposed on an end of the first and second tubular.

26. A method for coupling an expandable tubing assembly, comprising:

providing a sleeve comprising:

first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots formed therein, wherein an inner surface of the first and second ends of the connector is threaded and wherein the first and second ends of the connector include a recessed groove; and

an intermediate portion located between the first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots that at least partially overlap the slots formed in the first and second ends,

providing a first and second tubular having overlapping longitudinal slots; and

coupling the sleeve to corresponding threads on an outer surface of the first and second tubular.

REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Final Office Action dated February 26, 2002, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on May 26, 2002. Claims 1, 3-6, and 16-26 are pending in the application. Please enter the following amendments and reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

Claims 16, 22 and 23 are objected to because of informalities. Where appropriate, Applicant has amended the claims for clarification in accordance with the Examiner's comments.

Claims 1-4, 16-18, and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Lohbeck*, WO 98/22690. The Examiner states that *Lohbeck* discloses an expandable tubing assembly comprising a tubular connector defining overlapping

longitudinal slots and comprising an intermediate portion (area where 1 is pointing in Figure 1) located between slotted end portions, the connector being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material in the intermediate portion where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, and where the slotted end portions of the connector 1 are threaded to the nodes of respective end portions (threaded via screws 11) of the tubing lengths and the deformable fingers of the connector are axially spaced from the end most deformable fingers of the respective tubing lengths.

Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. *Lohbeck* discloses a sleeve comprising a series of staggered and partially overlapping slots that is arranged coaxially around the ends of adjoining tubulars and fastened to the tubulars using screws or rivets. (See, pg. 3, lns. 9-18). As seen in Figure 1, the "intermediate portion," as suggested by the Examiner, does not have any slots formed therein. Instead, slots are formed on either side of the intermediate portion. Therefore, *Lohbeck* does not teach, show, or suggest the connector being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material in the intermediate portion where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap as recited in claim 1. Further, *Lohbeck* does not teach, show, or suggest the connector intermediate portion is of substantially the same wall thickness of the tubing and wherein the connector end portions are upset as recited in claim 4. Further still, *Lohbeck* does not teach, show, or suggest the connector having an intermediate portion located between the first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots that at least partially overlap the slots formed in the first and second ends as recited in claim 16. Therefore, Applicant believes the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance of the same.

Claims 5-6, 19-21 and 23-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Lohbeck* in view of *Kozono*, U.S. Patent No. 4,619,472. The Examiner states that *Lohbeck* discloses the assembly described above, except that *Lohbeck* does not disclose that each end portion defines an internal thread for engaging a corresponding thread on an outer surface of each tubing end portion. The Examiner states that *Kozono* discloses inner threads at both ends of a connector and external threads on adjacent pipe ends in order to create a strong connection between two tubes which can be quickly assembled. Therefore, the Examiner concludes that it would have

been obvious to modify the connector in *Lohbeck* to include the mating internal and external threads with a groove and tongue arrangement in order to create a strong connection.

Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. As discussed above, *Lohbeck* discloses a sleeve comprising a series of staggered and partially overlapping slots that is arranged co-axially around the ends of adjoining tubulars and fastened to the tubulars using screws or rivets. (See, pg. 3, lns. 9-18). As seen in Figure 1, the "intermediate portion," as suggested by the Examiner, does not have any slots formed therein. Instead, slots are formed on either side of the intermediate portion. In addition, *Lohbeck* does not disclose a connector having internal and external mating threads or a groove and tongue arrangement. *Kozono* discloses pipe coupling having an inner tubular member cut with an external thread and an outer tubular member cut with an internal thread and possesses a sealing portion where the metal to metal contact of conical surfaces establishes a seal. The tip of the sealing portion of the inner tubular member is substantially not in contact with the tip of the outer tubular member. *Kozono* does not teach, show, or suggest an expandable slotted tubular or a how the threads may be implemented to connect an expandable slotted tubular.

Claims 5-6 depend from claim 1 and claims 19-21 depend from claim 16. As discussed above, Applicant believes claims 1 and 16 are in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicant believes claims 5-6 and 19-21 are also in condition for allowance. Further, the references, neither alone nor in combination, teach, show, or suggest the connector end portions define grooves to receive corresponding tongues provided on the tubing length end portions as recited in claim 6 and 20.

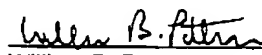
Additionally, the references, neither alone nor in combination, teach, show, or suggest an intermediate portion located between the first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots that at least partially overlap the slots formed in the first and second ends as recited in claims 23-26. Therefore, Applicant believes the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request allowance of the same.

With regards to the objected specification, the Examiner is advised that a Substitute Specification was filed with the Response to the First Office Action dated July 2, 2001.

The prior art made of record is noted. However, it is believed that the secondary references are no more pertinent to the Applicant's disclosure than the primary references cited in the office action. Therefore, it is believed that a detailed discussion of the secondary references is not deemed necessary for a full and complete response to this office action.

In conclusion, the references cited by the Examiner, neither alone nor in combination, teach, show, or suggest the apparatus or process of the present invention. Having addressed all issues set out in the office action, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



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APPENDIX

Marked Up Version Showing Amendments to the Claims:

16. (Amended) An expandable tubing assembly, comprising:
a first and second [tubular] tubulars having a plurality of longitudinal slots formed therein;
a connector threadably disposed between the first and second tubulars, wherein the connector comprises:
first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots formed therein; and
an intermediate portion located between the first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots that at least partially overlap the slots formed in the first and second ends.
22. (Amended) The assembly of claim 16, wherein the connector is attached to the first and second [tubular] tubulars using one or more means for connecting disposed between the radially spaced, longitudinal slots formed in the first and second ends of the connector.
23. (Amended) An expandable tubing assembly, comprising:
a first and second [tubular] tubulars having a plurality of longitudinal slots formed therein;
a connector disposed between the first and second slotted tubulars, wherein the connector comprises:
first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots formed therein, wherein an inner surface of the first and second ends of the connector is threaded; and
an intermediate portion located between the first and second ends having a plurality of radially spaced, longitudinal slots that at least partially overlap the slots formed in the first and second ends.

wherein the threaded inner surfaces of the first and second ends of the connector engage a corresponding thread on an outer surface of the first and second tubular.